

# CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. I.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xxiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER

## Christ's Agony in Gethsemane.

"MY soul," said Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, to his three attendants, Peter, and James, and John, "MY soul is very sorrowful even unto death;" or in other words, the agony of my mind, the perturbation of my spirits, and the violence of my grief, are almost too great for me to bear!

Various have been the reasons which divines have assigned for the excessive inquietude, dejection and woe with which Jesus was evidently oppressed at this gloomy hour. Sympathy for his frail disciples, regret for the ingratitude and treachery of Judas, compassion for the blindness and infatuation of his persecutors, and sorrow for the accumulated woes which he foresaw that their wickedness and cruelty would bring on their devoted country, may have had some share in thus depressing the mind and saddening the heart of the benevolent Jesus;—but, the principal cause of his deep and overwhelming affliction seems to have been a natural and resistless dread of the painful and excruciating death, which he was conscious that he was so soon to undergo. For, we must remember that Jesus was not only sensible to pain, but that his frame seems to have possessed more than ordinary sensibility. "He was," says Archbishop Tillotson, "made a pattern to the *weakest and tenderest* of mankind."\* "He sanctified the passion of fear," observes the wise and good Bishop Taylor, "and hallowed natural sadnesses, that we might not think the infelicities of our nature, and the calamities of our temporal condition to become criminal, so long as they make us not omit any duty.—He that fears death, and trembles at the approximation of it, and yet had rather die again

than sin once, hath not sinned in his fear. Christ hath hallowed it; and the necessitous condition of his nature is his excuse."†

Some have embraced notions so erroneous and so impious, as to imagine that the agony of Christ in the garden, and his sufferings on the cross, were the infliction of the Deity, transferring to his person the punishment due to all the generations of sinners from the beginning to the end of time. But, observes the sober and judicious Newcome, though "Jesus suffered by the wickedness of men, he was not *punished by the hand of God*. Nor should his death, and the circumstances preceding it, be considered *as a full compensation to strict justice*; but, as God's merciful, and gracious method of *RECONCILING MAN TO HIMSELF*."‡ "The captain of our salvation," he continues, "who was made perfect through suffering, set a most useful example to his followers, who were doomed to undergo the same fate. He gave them no lesson of proud and stoical insensibility. The natural evils of life he treated *as evils*, and *a violent death by lingering torture as the greatest natural evil*. He foresaw that some of his disciples would madly court persecution. But he gave no sanction to such enthusiasm by his conduct. He had before (Matt. x. 23) taught them to use prudence in avoiding persecution,—and he now taught them to pray against it with perseverance and earnestness, but, at the same time, with the most entire resignation." "It was fit that our Lord's example in this respect should be openly proposed to the world,—and I believe that every sober and pious christian (Luke xviii. 7) of the greatest constitutional fortitude, has publicly or secretly followed it, from the irresistible bent of human nature."§ "Our

Lord also taught christians in all ages, what the depravity of the world made it necessary for many to bear in mind, that, a state of the sharpest suffering was consistent with the favour of God, and that the most perfect innocence, and the brightest prospect of future glory, could not overcome the natural horror of them."\* We have thus some clear and convincing reasons assigned for Christ's agony and sufferings, without considering them as penal or vicarious.

The first idea of a vicarious punishment originated among christians, in a mixture of Jewish and heathen superstition respecting the virtue of sacrifices. They did not recollect the favourite maxim of our Lord, that *beneficence was more acceptable to God than sacrifice*; nor his solemn declaration, John iii. 16, that his mission into the world, which was consummated by his death upon the cross, *was not the effect of God's wrath* against the wicked, but of *his unspeakable compassion* for the ignorance and miseries of mankind. Those who seek a protection for this absurd and unscriptural idea of a vicarious punishment, under the shelter of the Jewish ritual, not consider that that ritual was so intended to preserve the Jews from the idolatry and polytheism of the neighbouring nations, by keeping their imaginations sensibly interested, their minds perpetually employed, and their time continually occupied with the performance of rites and ceremonies, sacrifices and oblations, which all tended to keep alive in their minds the *unity of the Godhead*; and thus to preserve them a distinct people, till the time appointed came for the opening of the christian dispensation; when the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to be done away. There are, I know, some people, whose fancy is stronger

† Taylor's Life of Christ, page 488.

‡ Newcome's Observat. page 426.

§ Observat. page 429, 430.

\* Sermon cxxvi. page 236.

\* Observat. page 429, 430.



than their judgment, who suppose that the varied sacrifices and ordinances of the Mosaic ritual, and indeed all the fractional parts of the Mosaic dispensation, were intended only as types and shadows of particular facts and doctrines in the history and institutions of the Messiah. Those, whose minds are not fitted for larger and grander views of the ways of God, may well employ their time in these puerile conceits; but they will be despised by wise and sober men, who do not like to assimilate the operations of the Deity to the trick and pantomime of a conjuror. "If," says Archbishop Newcome, when reprobating the frivolity of those allegorical interpretations of scripture, which originated in the schools of Cocceius and Hutchinson, "we allow ourselves" thus "to expatiate in the fields of imagination, *Fertur equis auriga neque audit curris habenas.*—VIRG.\*

He who is continually busy in burying the true grammatical sense of the Mosaic or the christian doctrine under a mass of types and allegories, is in danger of being bewildered in amaze, in which, if he increase the richness of his fancy, he is sure to impair the rectitude of his understanding. \* \* \*

\* Observat. page 167.

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*A Dialogue between a Universalist and a Limitarian.*

(Continued from page 140.)

*Lim. in continuation.*

Should one, who should be reputed a prophet, and one in whom we believed, and in whom we had great confidence, pronounce such judgments on the town of Boston, and inform us that this metropolis would so soon be destroyed, as that its destruction would take place in our day, we should most certainly be very deeply affected with the account, and should be desirous of as much information concerning the subject, as could be obtained. Accordingly did the disciples of Christ go to him privately and ask him the following questions; 1. "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" I acknowledge, sir, that I never understood what the disciples meant by the end of the world, until I carefully studied the subject in its connexion. I used to think, indeed, without calling the subject in question,

that by the end of the world, the disciples meant the end of the material world in which we live; but I am now fully satisfied that no such thing was meant, either in the questions, or the answers; but by the end of the world, we are to understand the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the Jewish polity, and the dispersion of the Jews. That this is the subject to which our Saviour replied, I think there can remain no reasonable doubt, after the following particulars are carefully noticed. Jesus immediately, in his reply, directed his observations in a way to relate to the end of the world, see ver. 6. "And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." Now as the disciples asked him of the end of the world, and he in his reply immediately speaks of the end, it appears to be doing great violence not to allow, that Jesus spake of the same end of which the disciples asked him. The divine teacher proceeds to inform his disciples of the things which should take place among the nations, and of what his enemies would do to them; and in the 13th verse he again speaks of the end, "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." That Jesus here spake of the same end of which he spake in the 6th verse cannot be doubted, and that in both, he spake of the same end of which his disciples asked him can be as little doubted. But I greatly wonder that this end should ever have been understood to mean the end of the natural world, which we inhabit, for certainly Jesus could not think that nobody would be saved, in the future, eternal world, only those who should continue here on earth, until the earth should come to an end! In the 14th verse Jesus again speaks of the end as follows; "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Now that this end meant the destruction of Jerusalem the very next words show beyond all doubt. "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place; then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of the house; neither let him which is in the

field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day; for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." This is a part of the description of the end of the world, and it is as evident as it can be, or as any thing can be, that in this account Jesus had no allusion to the end of the material world in which we live. In fact, it is real stupidity in any one to suppose any such thing. If this earth was all on fire, and the literal elements melting with fervent heat, and if the dead were coming out of the tombs to come to the judgment in which we have believed, is it reasonable to suppose that there could be any such thing as fleeing to the mountains for safety? Or would it avail any thing to pray that such a scene might not happen in the winter or on the sabbath day? Why would it be worse for those in the particular circumstances named, than for others? The plain fact is, Jesus was speaking of the end of the order of things which then existed, which was called the end of the world.

(To be Continued.)

**Christian Messenger.**

Philadelphia, Saturday, April 8, 1820.

**DIVINE JUSTICE.**

As we have taken the liberty to make some remarks on the writings of Dr. Ely, in which we have found much to censure, we are disposed to notice a piece, vol. ii. pages 138—154, inclusive, on "*Divine Justice.*" And we are more happy in noticing this piece, because we find much in it which meets our cordial approbation. The parts which are exceptionable will be pointed out as we pass along.

"That God is just in the punishment of sinners, may be made to appear, in the first place, from the truth that *justice is an essential attribute of the Deity.* Any thing attributed to God is an attribute; any thing justly attributed to God as appertaining to his nature, is an essential attribute. Now it is essential to Jehovah that he should be just; for if not just, he would not be worthy of our confidence, he would not answer the description of that being whom we call God. By *justice* in God,



considered as an inherent perfection, we intend that in the divine mind which renders it both physically and morally necessary that the Governor of the Universe should treat all his creatures according to law. It is justice in God that produces righteousness of conduct in relation to himself and all other beings. In doing justly, God acts concerning himself, and all other beings, as his *nature* requires him to act. He is just, therefore, by the *necessity of his own nature*. Justice in Jehovah as the moral governor of the universe, is that attribute of his nature, by which he is determined to render unto every accountable creature according to his merit or demerit, according to his intellectual, sensitive, voluntary, internal and external deeds, of a moral character. Now, if God should treat any man otherwise than the law which he has given man requires his Maker to treat him, he would be *unjust*." p. 138.

This we consider perfectly correct: yet, at the same time, we should contend that it may be just in God, or in any other good being, when his goodness so dictates, to subject any of his creatures to suffer pain, (with a gracious design of communicating good to the creature,) although the suffering may not be as a penalty for any crime committed. Who knows but that it may be ultimately good even for an innocent being to experience pain and suffering? On this ground, the sufferings of Christ, (who was made perfect thereby, Heb. ii. 10.) as well as the sufferings of little children, may be reconciled with the attribute of perfect goodness, without supposing those sufferings the infliction of a punishment which justice requires on account of sin. Justice, indeed, requires it, but requires it on a very different principle; viz. that of communicating a good which otherwise could not have been communicated. If it be asked, why the good could not be otherwise communicated, so as to dispense with the suffering altogether? we might as well ask, on Dr. Ely's plan, (which is the plan of all Calvinists,) why the sinner, i. e. the *elect*, could not be saved, without the sufferings of Christ? Let this question be answered, and it will furnish an answer to the other. On page 140, Dr. E. says,

"Would not our readers tremble at the thought of being in the hands of an infinite, omnipotent, unjust Disposer of

human events? Acknowledge, then, the justice of God in all things; and his *perfect* justice too, for if he may transcend the limits of equity in one degree, and in one instance, he may in any measure, and in every instance. If he might be unjust in a little, he might in a great concern. If he might render to any man less than he deserves, he might do the same by all; or he might render to all more punishment than they deserve. If he might clear the *guilty*, he might condemn the *innocent*."

"The *veracity* of God, in connexion with his works, will prove his justice; for he has said, that the person that sinneth shall die, and that he will render to every one according to his conduct; in other words, he has said, *that he will be just*; and if he is not, he will be unjust to himself; he will injure his own character; he will deny himself; which he can no more do than he can deceive; and, *he is not a man that he should lie*."

To all this we heartily agree, and yet at the same time it is impossible for us to reconcile it with the idea of God's inflicting a punishment on the head of the *innocent* Jesus, which was justly due to us, poor condemned criminals! and justly due to us only!

Page 141. "If justice might have relinquished its claim in any case, it might have done it in relation to the sufferings of the Mediator."

But according to the Calvinistic scheme, either justice never required any punishment of the *elect*, in a future state, or else justice has relinquished its claim in relation to the *elect*: For how could justice require the sufferings of the *elect* and the Mediator both? and if justice has received in the Mediator all that justice required, it is evident that justice required nothing of the *elect* more than to be exempted from all future suffering. So it would seem that the *elect* ever were the peculiar favourites of heaven; while the *non-elect* ever were vessels of wrath fitted only for destruction, in praise of vindictive justice! For if, as Dr. E. says, "it is reasonable to conclude that God cannot in any case dispense with his justice, without denying and dishonouring himself;" and if it be true that God does dispense with punishing the *elect* in a future state, then it is evident that his justice never required that

they should be so punished. Dr. E. must admit this, or else admit that, according to his own statement, God will deny and dishonour himself by exempting the *elect* from future punishment.

But, Dr. E. says, "He suffers none to escape: he clears, by no means, for no consideration, any guilty being. Should he punish one sinner, and not another, the inference would be a fair one, that he punishes, not from any necessity of his holy nature, but arbitrarily, without any sufficient reasons; for if he might allow one transgressor to sin with impunity, he might another, and another, until there should not be a single monument of his justice. But he does, in fact, punish every sinner, without one exception; and hence we must conclude, that he punishes, from regard to inflexible, indispensable equity." p. 145.

Here it is said, "Should he punish one sinner, and not another, the inference would be a fair one, that he punishes not from any necessity of his holy nature, but arbitrarily, without any sufficient reasons." Now, only add the words *in Christ* after the word *sinner*, in the above sentence, and it will turn this argument directly on the head of the doctor; and how will he extricate himself from the difficulty? For "should he punish one sinner" [in Christ, as his "substitute,"] and not another, the inference would be a fair one, that he punishes [sinners "in their substitute,"] not from any necessity of his holy nature, but arbitrarily, without any sufficient reasons!"

That the reader may see this in its clear light, we wish to connect here what the doctor says, on page 154.

"To punish those, whose sins Christ has not been punished for, is an act of justice, that requires not even the offer of mercy, in any shape to justify. The lost experience, upon the whole, nothing but the justice of God.

"But to punish those very sins again in the *elect*, which have been punished in their substitute, would be an act of double injustice:—injustice to him who by covenant obeyed and suffered, that they might be justified:—and injustice to the *elect*, to whom salvation has been promised, and in whom the hope of salvation has been excited, through the oath of God and the blood of Christ."



According to all this it must be obvious to every one that, in the opinion of Dr. E., justice never required any punishment "in the elect," but only "in their substitute:" i.e. in Christ who "has been punished" for their "sins!" All this is clearly made out by the doctor's own arguments, and almost in his own words; and he cannot deny it.

To the following, which we find on page 143, we are fully agreed.

"Now the sanction of the moral law is the penalty annexed to it; is the threatening of punishment for every act of disobedience. The law assures us that sin shall not go unpunished; and if the law is holy, just, and good, proceeding from a just lawgiver, then it must be just to inflict the penalty of the law when it is incurred.

"Were the law unreasonable, and the result of a mere arbitrary act of God; it might then be unjust to punish every one for his infraction of it; but since the law is just in every part, whether it be precept or penalty, it must be a just thing with God to execute it.

"That punishment which is ordered by a good law, is a *just punishment*; and no other will the Almighty ever inflict; so that if the law be the rule of just conduct, both in the judge, and in those whose duty it is to obey it, then must the dealings of God with his creatures, which are of a penal nature, all be righteous."

On page 147, he says,

"Should any one, here, or hereafter, be afflicted in any degree, who does not *deserve* it, [or, we would add here, without designing the *good* of the afflicted thereby,] all heaven might cry out of wrong and outrage, and our Maker blush at the injury: but the persons now punished, or to be punished, are sinners, of whom not one dare say, upon reflection, 'I am innocent,' unless he dare give the lie to God, who has said, that *all have sinned and come short of his glory*. We never knew a man, who would not confess, that he had done some things which he ought not to have done; that he had omitted duties which he ought to have performed; and that his conscience sometimes reproves him of sin."

We are not informed that Joseph deserved the treatment which he received from his brethren, for any sin which he had committed, either against them or against God; yet God suffered it to

take place, and at the same time meant it unto *good*, "to keep much people alive." Such kind of sufferings can be reconciled with the justice of God, although it be not on account of any offence committed, as well as any kind of punishment can be reconciled with his goodness, even when it is for the greatest possible offence. It is always right to do good, although accompanied with much evil, if the good, on the whole, is sufficient to overbalance the evil. On this principle, all the sufferings of human nature can be accounted for, and reconciled with the goodness of God, even when they cannot be traced to any real or supposed crimes for which the creature is thus punished. But if we were to lay out of the scale of human misery all that may be traced to some actual transgression as its natural or moral cause, the surplus would be comparatively small.

(To be Continued.)

### PROPOSAL,

BY HENRY BOWEN, CONGRESS STREET, BOSTON,  
FOR PUBLISHING BY SUBSCRIPTION.

### A SERIES OF LETTERS,

In defence of Divine Revelation,

In reply to the Rev. Abner Kneeland's serious enquiry into the authenticity of the same,

BY THE REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

TO WHICH WILL BE ADDED,

A religious correspondence between the Rev. Hosea Ballou, and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Buckminster, and the Rev. Joseph Walton, Pastors of Congregational Churches in Portsmouth, N. H.

Proposals for the above work were issued about a year since, by the Rev. Abner Kneeland, of Philadelphia, who has recently disposed of the manuscripts and copy right to the subscriber, who, from the frequent solicitations of a number, who have had some knowledge of the above Letters to have them published, believing it will tend to strengthen the belief of many in the truth of divine Revelation, and thereby serve the great cause of Christianity; now offers them to a pious and liberal public, and especially to those who have heretofore so liberally patronized the works of the Rev. Hosea Ballou, which have been published by the subscriber; and to this work their patronage is most respectfully solicited,

By their obedient servant,  
HENRY BOWEN.

CONDITIONS.

I. The work will be neatly printed

on good paper, and contain from 250 to 300 pages duodecimo, handsomely bound and lettered.

II. It will be put to press as soon as a sufficient number of subscribers are obtained to warrant the expense.

III. Price to subscribers one dollar, payable on delivery. Those who obtain eight subscribers, and become responsible for them, shall be entitled to one copy gratis.

March 22, 1820.

Subscriptions for the above work will be received by the Editor of the Messenger, No. 137, Chesnut Street. It is proper also to state, that although proposals were issued by Mr. Kneeland, as above stated, he has not as yet, solicited any subscribers in this city; but was on the point of doing it, when an offer was made by Mr. Bowen for the manuscripts, &c. which he saw fit to accept. He is disposed to recommend the work, although he has now no other interest in it than in the good which he believes it is calculated to do in the religious world: nothing has been written on either side but what is serious and candid; and he believes it to be capable of removing all doubts which may exist in the mind of the reader respecting the truth of *divine revelation*.

### POETS' CORNER.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

*The fruit of the Spirit.*

How sweet the fruit the Spirit yields,  
How lasting and how fair;  
No spices of Arabian fields,  
Can with this fruit compare.

Love grows on branches bending low,  
Joy tips each lofty spray,  
Peace all around, above, below,  
Its spicy sweets convey.

Long suffering grows and ripens here,  
A cure for ev'ry grief;  
And gentleness forbidding fear,  
Is pluck'd from every leaf.

Goodness in many a cluster shoots,  
And faith is green and fair;  
While meekness hid 'mong other fruits,  
Invites her favourites there.

Here temperance grows, a virtue bright,  
And well prepares the feast;  
Here, O my soul, take thy delight,  
Of all the guests the least.

B.

### PRINTING

Neatly executed at this Office.